



The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, & the Problem of Domination

Jessica Benjamin

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, & the Problem of Domination

Jessica Benjamin

The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, & the Problem of Domination Jessica Benjamin

Why do people submit to authority and derive pleasure even others have over them? What is the appeal of domination and submission, and why are they so prevalent in erotic life? Why is it so difficult for men and women to meet as equals? Why, indeed, do they continue to recapitulate the positions of master and slave? In *The Bonds of Love*, noted feminist theorist and psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin explains why we accept and perpetuate relationships of domination and submission. She reveals that domination is a complex psychological process which ensnares both parties in bonds of complicity, and shows how it underlies our family life, our social institutions, and especially our sexual relations, in spite of our conscious commitment to equality and freedom.

The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, & the Problem of Domination Details

Date : Published July 12th 1988 by Pantheon Books (first published 1988)

ISBN : 9780394757308

Author : Jessica Benjamin

Format : Paperback 320 pages

Genre : Psychology, Feminism, Psychoanalysis, Philosophy, Theory, Nonfiction, Love

 [Download The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, & the Prob ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, & the Pr ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, & the Problem of Domination Jessica Benjamin

From Reader Review The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, & the Problem of Domination for online ebook

Stephen MD says

PRO: States the problem clearly: Many women get turned on by fantasies of submission.

CON: Never quite manages to generate a convincing answer. The reason, I think, is that like Freud, Benjamin assumes this must reflect a "wrong path taken" in girl's development.

I think we're better off with a default assumption that says the capacity to be turned on by erotic submission might be something more elemental.

I discuss this at length on pages 258-259 of my book, Love Worth Making.

madeline says

this book changed my life. that clearly. that quickly.

and everything about jessica benjamin sent my mind spinning and wrestling and contemplating and wow wow wow the things in this book.

not only does benjamin point out the gaps in freud's theories, but she also grapples with the theory of mutual recognition, and explains it in such helpful and insightful language.

Sarah says

Remind me never to read a book with the word "psychoanalysis" in the title or subtitle. Feminist mumbo jumbo is still mumbo jumbo. And I didn't even agree with her principle arguments, especially in chapter 5. Grrr...waste of time.

Flavia says

I love this book. I picked it up together with "Like subjects, love objects" and started with the latter. After some time the book became intolerable and foreign, I couldn't follow it at all. I decided this author is not for me and almost returned both books. It's good I decided to look into this one at least a bit before giving it away. Now I am completely hooked. It gave me some profound insights. I like that the author has balanced views. She doesn't strive to prove this or that but favors embracing contradictions. She points out and criticizes the gender polarity that exists in our current collective consciousness and public discourse. It's an essential feminist read.

It's difficult but worth it. I'm planning to read it again to metabolize the information fully.

Kalia says

This is a difficult book for me to read. The psychoanalysis is a bit hard for me at time, but that's not at the root of my troubles. What makes it hard is the content, not the style. Sometimes it's painful to look at myself and my relationships, and that's exactly what this book forces me to do. The problem of domination and more importantly for me, submission, is something i've been thinking about for awhile, so this book his helpful, albeit painful.

Christen says

Overall it was a decent historical/psychoanalysis history of the psychology behind gender social norms; it is too wordy. Each chapter can be cut in half and still say the same thing. Yes, the way we were brought up is affected by the societal norms from generation from generation. Yes, all the males in psychology focused on men in their study and assumed that duality in things makes women the opposite. We know now that is not the case. But the book was interesting in regards that I read the 1988 edition and see how far we have come in a short matter in time in understanding but not in reality.

Mary K says

No, psychoanalysis is still primarily useless aside from literary analysis... but hey, sometimes it produces really stunning works of contemplative feminism. Her discussion of the Story of O is obnoxious; instead of seizing the opportunity to interview an individual involved in the BDSM community, she just interrogates a piece of erotica. Other than that, stellar book.

Amanda says

What I learnt from this book, well I wasn't able to read this book when it was assigned in class. I had a strong resistance towards it probably becasue Jessica Benjamin was literally hitting me right on the head. I guess I have learnt something about myself a year and a half later... Will get around to reading this again. someday

Cansu says

It is pretty good and easy to read. I've read it enthusiastically as if it were a novel...

Derrith says

I was introduced to this book nearly ten years ago by my favorite professor, Dr. Schapiro, and have read and referenced it numerous times since then. I consider it one of the core books that have shaped my personal belief system and values. In fact, almost every book I read for Dr. Schapiro in college is part of that core

collection!

Benjamin writes in a way that makes psychoanalysis and feminist theory accessible even to those who have not studied psychology and/or literary criticism. She ties the concepts of master and slave, dominance and submissiveness, to psychoanalytic theories such as object-relations or intersubjectivity. While she references the patriarchal order and certain societal stereotypes, she does not place blame.

This book is valuable in understanding the dynamics of relationships- In every person's life, there are those we lead, and those we follow; those we manipulate, and those we are manipulated by; those we dominate, and those we submit to. *The Bonds of Love* provides insight into the psychological and psychosocial causes of this dynamic.

Julie says

Changed my mode of apprehension from as an object to be seen, back to a subject that sees, the original position. I also began to write my novel at this time. I began staring strangers down on the sidewalk to experiment with Benjamin's idea of personhood as colored by this neat dichotomy. Poof, like that, I was looking, seeing thinking and writing.

Jamie says

This is a fabulous fabulous book. It lags at times, but for someone who is only sparsely versed in psychoanalytic theory (as I am--now being forced out of my protective zone, since I like using people like Kristeva, sans hardcore psychoanalytic theory), Benjamin provides very accessible accounts of major frameworks and debates that have been--and are still being--articulated in the theory. For example, we all know a bit about oedipalization--but Benjamin clearly defines the parameters of various visions of the process, laying everything lucidly out in order to structure her own argument concerning identificatory development. Someone here said that the chapter on S&M is badly researched (which admittedly, using a single book as representative isn't really social critique--it's literary critique), but the explication of the Story of O. was beautifully written and certainly fit in with the rest of the text--and ill-formed or not, it was probably my favorite chapter of the book.

In any case, this one comes highly recommended for those interested in feminist psychoanalytic criticism, those hoping to read more on domination and subordination, and anyone trying to escape the specter of penis envy. I'm actually planning to read another of her books soon, as this was so engaging and fascinating a read.

Matt says

I found it fairly dense, and Benjamin makes very clear the historical positioning that she is coming from. I found this great and informational, but at times it was also hard to follow because of how careful she was in laying the groundwork for how domination comes to exist in individual and cultural experiences. Her thoughts are using Hegel's dialectic of master and slave were informative and I believe influence the way we

can think about culture, and microaggressions. It reframes many of the discussions around cultural competence, into a discussion of acknowledging power, and working towards having a mutual view of the other, instead of a tokenizing or exoticizing view. It is hard to imagine a world that is not at least subtly influenced by these bonds of domination, but Benjamin does provide one possible way forward in this regard.

Simon says

Not sure this belongs on my "read-enough-of" shelf (for books where I think I've got the gist adequately) rather than on my simply "unfinished" shelf, but what the heck. I'm gonna live dangerously. The first chapter is on some competing theories of the development of the ego, focussing mostly on what the author calls "intersubjective theory," inspired by Hegel (on the master-slave dialectic) and Winnicott - her approach - and the alternative ego-psychology account (associated here with Margaret Mahler). The former, preferred, account sees subjectivity as arising from the beginning on the basis of mutuality and recognition of the other. The latter sees the ego as differentiating itself from a primal unity with the early caregiver (referred to as the mother, since it is usually the mother) and deploying a range of identifications and introjections in its engagement with the world, thus not really confronting the other in her own reality.

The second chapter, near the end of which I felt I had read enough of the book, deals with the problem of domination in the erotic context, via a lengthy discussion of *The Story Of O*. After a while, the descriptions of what goes on in this book in terms of recognition, annihilation, ideal other, dependence, and so on becomes like white noise. If all the sentences were shuffled into paragraphs randomly, I suspect I would not be able to tell the difference. I seem to have this reaction to some psychoanalytic writing (see my review of Bechdel's *Are You My Mother?*). Not sure whether this is a deficiency in me or it.

Aida Hussen says

I've read this book several times before, and am skimming through it once more as I prepare to write a diss chapter that uses psychoanalytic theories of masochism as an allegory for racial/political desire in Octavia Butler's novel *"Kindred."* Benjamin is brilliant and wonderfully accessible. I alternate between convictions that I am a masochist/that I am a sadist.
